

# Tenderfoots can get a taste of the West at Big Springs Ranch

## OUT & ABOUT IN UTAH COUNTY

**By Brooke Adams**

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**PROVO** — There's nothing like a horse ride through mountain hills and dales to take the worry out of a person.

The gentle clip-clopping of hooves on a beaten trail, the rippling motion of wind swooshing through knee-high meadow grass, hawks circling over head, the twitter of bird song filling the air — an hour of that and you'll find yourself saying, "What, me worry?"

Of course, maybe a wagon ride is more to your liking. Or a barn dance. Maybe your children are just as happy going round and round a ring on the back of a pony, or panning for gold in an old miner's sluice.

No matter what taste of the West you're after, Big Springs Ranch in the South Fork of Provo Canyon has it. Today and Saturday is the grand opening for the ranch, which is operated by Harry and Joanne Stephens. Hourlong guided trail rides are half-price, there will be free hot dogs for all, and after 5 p.m. the Silver Sage Band will perform in the barn, which has an old Western town interior.

The barn is just up the road a stretch, past the graveyard where Jake Price and other old settlers are buried. Old "Claim Jumper" Price finally died of lead poisoning after being shot once a year for the better part of a decade.

Provo City owns 2,000 acres in the Big Springs area

and last year decided to open it up for public use. The Stephens successfully won a bid to operate the riding stable at Big Springs.

Through the fall, from 9 a.m. to sundown, the Stephens will offer visitors a taste of the old Mountain West. There are one- and two-hour guided trail rides, pony rides and hay rides.

Reservations can be made for large groups and for half-day rides and breakfast, lunch, dinner and overnight rides. The barn also can be reserved for dances, company parties or reunions.

There are trails catering to various levels of riding ability.

Big Springs is most well-known as the site of the Provo School District's fifth-grade camp, which is up the road from the ranch. Also, the Great Western Trail, extending from Canada to Mexico, winds through the city's Big Spring property.

It is common on morning and evening rides to spot deer and moose ambling through the meadows, just yards away, Joanne Stephens said.

And sharp-eyed riders may see the ghost deer, who is said to run off a certain cliff and then vanish. Like any good hollow, Big Spring has its share of legends.

An old tale has it that a mountain man named Keim roams the back canyons of South Fork. He rides a "16-hand high mule" and has been known to wander up to campfires at night to share company and swap stories.

For information about horse rides or group reservations, call the Stephenses at 225-8589. To get to Big Springs Ranch turn off Provo Canyon Road at the Chalet Cafe, drive through Vivian Park and head 3.3 miles up South Fork Road. The ranch is on the left side of the road.



Jared Loftus, 13, left, and family members go for a midday horseback ride at Big Springs.

PHOTOGRAPHY/STUART W. JOHNSON



**MUTUAL FUND QUOTATIONS** at day's opening

e—Ex capital gains distribution      s—Stock dividend or split  
p—Fund assets used to pay distribution costs – 12(b)(1) plan

x—Ex cash dividend      f—Previous day's quotation  
r—Redemption fee or contingent deferred sales load may apply

(NL)n—No front-end load or contingent deferred sales load  
t—Both n and r

Val. is net asset value/share     $\text{Offrg} = \text{NAV} + \text{any sale charge}$ [illegible]